

# *Documents on Diplomacy: Lessons*

## *Testing, Testing . . . Is the Monroe Doctrine Working? The French in Mexico*

Standard: II. Time, Continuity, and Change  
VI. Power, Authority, and Governance  
IX. Global Connections  
X. Civic Ideals and Practices

Grade Level: 9–12

Objectives: The student will:

- Analyze the French presence in Mexico
- Identify key players in the interplay of the U.S., France, and Mexico
- Interpret the implications of U.S. involvement in international affairs
- Determine the effectiveness of the Monroe Doctrine

Time: 1 class period

Materials: Documents: **1863** *France has no Right to Intervene in Mexico*

Resources: *Biography of William Henry Seward*  
*Excerpts from the Monroe Doctrine*

Exercises: *One-Fisted or Two-Fisted: Secretary of State Seward & France*

Procedures:

### *Setting the Stage*

William Seward was Secretary of State in the Lincoln and Johnson Administrations. Best known for his purchase of Alaska, Secretary Seward masterfully dealt with foreign affairs while the United States was mired in the Civil War. First, he conducted diplomatic dealings with the European powers to avoid their involvement in the war. Then, after Napoleon III of France placed Maximilian on the throne of Mexico, Seward had to decide when or how to apply the full force of the Monroe Doctrine because France might decide to recognize the Confederacy in retaliation. It was a delicate balancing act. . . .

1. Provide the biography of William Seward for students to read or the teacher may summarize it for them.
2. Review the purpose of the Monroe Doctrine. Read excerpts (included in *Resources*) to students.
3. Explain to students that they will examine Seward's diplomatic decisions during and after the Civil War. Distribute the document, *France has no Right to Intervene in Mexico*, for students to read AND identify the two main dilemmas addressed in the document:
  - a. France could support the Confederacy in the Civil War.
  - b. France has installed Emperor Maximilian I as the head of the Mexican government.
4. Discuss Seward's reactions to each of these dilemmas. What were his decisions?
5. Distribute the exercise, *One-Fisted or Two-Fisted: Secretary of State William Seward and France*.
6. Provide these instructions to the students:

*Refer again to the two dilemmas faced by Secretary of State William Seward. Both of these actions by France defy the warnings issued by the United States in the Monroe Doctrine. If you were the Secretary of State, how would you handle each of these dilemmas? Do you "save face" and put the Monroe Doctrine into military action or would diplomacy be the best course? Read some of the comments made by Secretary Seward and make YOUR foreign policy decisions.*
7. Have students complete the two activities, Ranking and Classification, in *One-Fisted or Two-Fisted*.
8. Arrange students in groups of 4–5. Have students share their rankings. Which statements received the highest rankings? What was the rationale for the students' choices? Did diplomacy or more forceful actions prevail? Groups should agree on the one statement to rank as #1. Have all groups report their results. Based on discussion, agree, as a class, on the top statement.
9. While in groups, share results of statements designated as One-Fisted or Two-Fisted? Which were circled the most? How does the outcome of the "Fist Count" reflect the impact of diplomacy in the resolution of France's presence in Mexico?